

Jennifer Selendy Named Corporate Counsel's "Managing Partner of the Year"

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Less than three years after co-founding Selendy & Gay, Jennifer Selendy has been recognized as Corporate Counsel's "Managing Partner of the Year."

(Excerpts from this interview were [originally published in Corporate Counsel](#))

What was your route to the top?

I got as much litigation experience as I could at every stage of my career. I never said no to an opportunity, and by the time I was a mid-level associate, I was ready to lead cases on my own. Realizing that the power structure of Big Law perpetually leaves women out of the race to the top, I became an entrepreneur. Selendy & Gay's collaborative culture allows us to focus on the work we want to do. We match the right lawyer with the right client, and we don't hoard client relationships. This has yielded successful outcomes and profitability, and lawyers thrive in that environment, upholding the highest standard of excellence.

Looking back, what do you wish you had known when you started out in the legal profession?

I wish I had understood the importance of networking. Even with a degree from Harvard Law School, I still felt out of place in the corporate law universe. I spent so much time wanting to be seen, respected, feared and taken seriously that I lost sight of people who moved on and missed out on building relationships. Today I sit on three boards and actively participate in pro bono and philanthropic work. I recognize and embrace the great impact that networking can have on a career in law. I push myself to work with and learn from others, and urge rising legal professionals to do the same.

What is the best leadership advice you've given or received, and why do you think it was effective?

Leaders listen first and speak last. The more senior you become, the easier it is to delude yourself that you're connected to people. When you don't listen, you miss a lot from the people you are trying to empower and mentor. And if you do talk first, you must become the kind of leader people will bring information to. Also, advice that is most important can sometimes be the advice you don't want to hear. A mentor once explained that a senior partner was threatened by the rising trajectory of my career. Once I understood that, I had the confidence to move to another equally prestigious firm and quickly became an equity partner.

Attorney

- Jennifer Selendy